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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

World Summit for Social Development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the attached report, prepared by the regional commissions, pursuant to paragraph 14 of its resolution 47/92 of 16 December 1992, in which the Assembly requested the regional commissions to include in their programme of work for 1993 the question of the World Summit for Social Development, with particular emphasis on the social situation in their respective regions, and to formulate proposals thereon and prepare an integrated report to be submitted to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

ANNEX

Report of the regional commissions

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 14 of its resolution 47/92 of 16 December 1992, the General Assembly requested the regional commissions to include in their programme of work for 1993 preparations for the World Summit for Social Development, with particular emphasis on the social situation in their respective regions, including proposals, and to prepare an integrated report to be submitted to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

2. In compliance with that resolution, the regional commissions have started their preparations for this important global event, which will focus on social development as an area that lends itself to implementation of national action, cooperation in the formulation of regional positions and coordination in the adoption of a global plan of action, taking into consideration the social and economic disparities at the intra-regional and interregional levels.

3. The objectives of strengthening the mutually reinforcing relationship between economic progress and human development and of achieving economic growth and efficiency with social justice and equity are common to all nations. Eradicating poverty, promoting productive employment and realizing social integration - the interrelated themes of the World Summit for Social Development - are the basis for integrated action for social development that allows economic growth without sacrificing social equity.

4. The World Summit for Social Development is an event in which all nations of the world will reaffirm their commitment to achieving sustainable development and decreasing the margin of disparities among nations and regions and among people. It is within this context that the regional commissions have undertaken preparation for the Summit in their respective regions. In compliance with resolution 47/92, the unified report highlights their activities in terms of, first, social development in the Commission's overall work programme in the past few years; second, activities undertaken in 1993; and third, planned activities for 1994.

II. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

A. Social development in the Commission's overall work programme in the past few years

5. After the momentous changes in Central and Eastern Europe over the past few years, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) now comprises 53 member countries with enormous diversity in geographical location, size and magnitude of their economies and population, and the level of political stability. Mainly as a result of the ongoing transformation in this part of Europe, the ECE region ceased to be an élite group of moderately to highly industrialized countries with well developed, yet different welfare policies and programmes, and no major social problems.

6. Recent developments, in both market and transition economies, indicate a number of worrisome tendencies. In the countries whose economies are in transition these include continuing declines in economic activities, growing

unemployment, falling real incomes and growing labour-related relative poverty, and the multiplication of a variety of social problems, which in the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe greatly contribute to social tensions. In the market economies, the recent trends suggest continued economic stagnation or weak recovery of economic activities, unprecedented levels of unemployment and major strains on the welfare systems, which bring to the forefront compounding social problems.

7. The Commission's mandate was and remains restricted to economic developments and issues in this now highly heterogenous region, to the exclusion of related social trends and problems. Recent work of the Commission, therefore, has been focused on macroeconomic developments in major sectors, such as industry, transport and trade, with a particular emphasis on issues arising from the political, economic and institutional transformations under way in transition countries. However, as the multifaceted activities of the Commission focusing on the various development issues could not be carried out in isolation from social trends, which are tightly interwoven with economic trends, in recent years the ECE secretariat has been active in developing a knowledge base in a variety of social areas, primarily in population, housing, environment, and statistics.

8. The secretariat has been engaged in studies on socio-economic determinants and consequences of selected highly relevant demographic trends, such as the continuing unprecedentedly low fertility, growing diversity of family forms and rising family instability, progressive population ageing and growing international migration. These trends, the salience of which cannot be overemphasized, are having an increasing impact on the economic and social make-up of the societies in this region that requires continuing adaptation of public policies. These studies are being carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and member countries, especially transition countries.

9. The work recently conducted in the field of social and demographic statistics focused on the preparation of the regional recommendations for the 1990 round of population and housing censuses for countries in the ECE region, the publication of a special volume on demographic and economic consequences and implications of changing population age structures, the production of annual matrices on the flows of international migrants among ECE countries and between ECE countries and other regions, and the development, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of a framework for cultural statistics.

B. Activities undertaken in 1993

10. The Commission, in collaboration with the UNFPA and the Council of Europe, convened the European Population Conference (23-26 March 1993, Geneva). This intergovernmental meeting reviewed population trends and population-related policies in the context of social and economic trends in the ECE region and adopted a far-reaching set of recommendations, including those on future international cooperation in the population field. The Conference was a regional contribution to the preparation of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in 1994. Preparations are under way for

convening a high-level regional preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

11. The Commission collaborated with the secretariat for the International Year of the Family in convening the Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of the Family for Europe and North America (26-30 April 1993, Valletta, Malta). The Commission was also represented at and actively contributed to the proceedings of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs (28 June-2 July 1993, Bratislava, Slovakia).

12. Long-term unemployment in market economies and the impact of the restructuring and privatization process on the employment situation in the transition economies were considered by the Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments at their twenty-ninth session, held in June 1993. With regard to Western Europe, the Senior Advisers stressed that the persistence for too long of high levels of unemployment - that is, between 10 and 20 per cent - runs the risk of encouraging dangerous political movements and forms of protest and of increasing protectionist forces to the detriment of all. In the transition economies the problem is considered even more serious. If unemployment, which has already reached very high levels, continues to spread on a large scale, together with its usual accompaniment of social discrimination and growing inequality, the result could well be the rejection of the market system together with democracy itself. For the present levels of unemployment to be substantially reduced in all ECE countries, measures such as job sharing, reforms in unemployment insurance systems, retraining, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, etc., are essential but, in the view of the Senior Economic Advisers, unlikely to suffice. Given the importance of the challenges posed by high levels of unemployment and their implication for social and political stability in the ECE region, the Senior Economic Advisers decided to revert to this question in their future sessions on the basis of specific proposals to be formulated by their Bureau early in 1994.

13. Within the programme of work of the Conference of European Statisticians, major 1993 outputs include the publication of a regional set of recommendations on current housing and building statistics for countries in the region, and the organization of intergovernmental meetings in the field of fertility and family surveys, housing statistics, cultural statistics (with Eurostat), labour statistics (with the International Labour Organisation (ILO)) and a workshop on the results of technical assistance in statistics to countries in transition are some of the key activities on which work has been focused in 1993.

C. Activities planned for 1994

14. In 1994, the ECE secretariat will launch, in collaboration with UNFPA and possibly the Council of Europe, research and workshops on social policies accommodating and influencing population trends in member countries. The objective is to evaluate successes and failures of population-related social policies in market and transition economies and examine how those policies can better serve the purpose of modifying and accommodating undesirable population trends (e.g., excessive population ageing and uncontrolled international migration). This will be one of the Commission's contributions to the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development.

15. Within the programme of work of the Conference of European Statisticians, it is planned to initiate the development of a new set of regional recommendations for the population and housing censuses to be conducted by member countries in or around the year 2000, and there are plans to organize intergovernmental educational statistics (jointly with UNESCO) and demographic publication of a handbook on international migration statistics, a handbook on statistics on women and men, and materials on informal sectors of the economy.

III. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A. Social development in the Commission's overall work programme in the past few years

16. Activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 47/92 fall under two closely related areas of concern: (a) implementation of the Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Towards the Year 2000 and Beyond (see Commission resolution 48/5) and (b) mobilization and support of regional, subregional and national initiatives for poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development.

17. Despite substantial economic progress made by many countries in the ESCAP region, particularly in East and South-East Asia, a wide gap remains between social development and economic progress. Recognizing the need to narrow this gap as well as to integrate social concerns into development policies, plans and programmes, the Commission in 1992 adopted the Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Towards 2000 and Beyond. The Strategy aims at raising the quality of both the economic and social life of the people through the eradication of absolute poverty, realization of distributive equity and enhancement of popular participation.

18. The regional Strategy complements earlier efforts by Governments of the ESCAP region to give increased attention to the social aspects of development, particularly to issues relating to the needs and potential of the poor, and reflects a shift in the thrust of social development policy from a sectoral to an increasingly integrated, multi-sectoral approach. Those earlier efforts included frequent calls for greater emphasis on social aspects in rural development programmes and on quality-of-life issues as an aspect of human resources development, as embodied in the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development (see Commission resolution 274 (XLIV)). The Strategy is also supportive of various activities to implement regional instruments and initiatives dealing with specific social issues or specific social groups such as the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development (see E/CONF.84/PC/14, annex II) and the Regional Strategy on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development (see Commission resolution 47/7).

19. In addition to its ongoing activities in support of national programmes of action for social development, ESCAP has embarked on a comprehensive restructuring of its work programme from a sectoral to a thematic, multidisciplinary approach, starting in the 1994-1995 biennium, with "poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development" as one of its three thematic subprogrammes (see Commission resolution 48/2, annex V). The poverty

alleviation subprogramme will apply a holistic approach in dealing with the following major subject areas: growth strategies and structural reforms; human resources development; women in development; social policy, social services and social security; population issues, including rural-urban migration; agriculture and rural development; and human settlements and urbanization. Activities in these areas will be undertaken in a concerted manner with a view to improving opportunities for all sections of society to share fully in the development process, with special emphasis on the problems of disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups. To ensure the effective implementation of national policies and programmes directed at poverty alleviation, cooperation among government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector will be promoted.

B. Activities undertaken in 1993

20. An Expert Group Meeting on the Implementation of the Social Development Strategy was held at Bangkok from 8 to 11 December 1992 to advise ESCAP on the modalities for the effective implementation of the Strategy. One of its principal recommendations was to integrate ESCAP's activities in support of the implementation of the Strategy with those in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.

21. The Commission, assuming its lead role in coordinating the regional support activities of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies in the implementation of the Strategy, established in 1992 an Inter-agency Task Force on the Implementation of the Strategy to promote intersectoral participation and ensure effective coordination of the regional activities of all concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies in the implementation of the Strategy. The first session of the Task Force was held at Bangkok on 14 December 1992.

22. An Expert Group Meeting on National Poverty Concepts and Measurement was organized by ESCAP and held in September 1993. A series of studies on poverty concepts, approaches to the measurement of poverty, and characteristics of the poverty situation in the ESCAP region were prepared for that Meeting. The recommendations of the Meeting were transmitted to the Committee on Poverty Alleviation through Economic Growth and Social Development, at its first session, held at Bangkok from 20 to 24 September 1993. To guide the discussions of the Committee at its first session, the secretariat prepared a series of papers on the regional poverty situation, national approaches to poverty alleviation, international initiatives to alleviate poverty in the region and three other documents focusing on the promotion of people's participation in poverty alleviation through community-based approaches, target group-oriented programmes and non-governmental organizations. The Committee discussed further regional preparations for the World Summit, including an Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, to be held at Manila in October 1994. In addition to the continuation of activities supportive of Governments in implementation of the Social Development Strategy, the Commission in 1993 embarked on the implementation of an Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade for Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, which had been adopted at the Meeting to Launch the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, held at Beijing in December 1992.

23. The Commission also organized an Asian and Pacific Symposium of NGOs on Women in Development, to be held at Manila in November 1993, to provide inputs to a regional plan of action to advance the status of women in Asia and the Pacific, for consideration at the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women and Development, to be held at Jakarta in June 1994.

24. The Commission organized a Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, which will be held at Bangkok on 1 and 2 November. Urban poverty and the urban environment were among the major issues discussed at the Conference. The second session of the Inter-agency Task Force on the Implementation of the Social Development Strategy was held in December 1993. Among other matters, that session discussed regional support of preparations for the World Summit for Social Development.

C. Activities planned for 1994

25. The Commission will convene an Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development. The Government of the Philippines has invited ESCAP to hold the Conference at Manila in October 1994. The member Governments will discuss at that regional conference various issues relating to the three themes (social integration, alleviation of poverty and expansion of productive employment) of the Summit. It is envisaged that the Conference will formulate certain proposals for development cooperation in these areas, for further consideration at the Summit.

26. Research on substantive issues to be considered at the Ministerial Conference will be undertaken in early 1994. The findings of that research will be examined at an expert group meeting to be convened in mid-1994. The expert group will draft a series of recommendations, including a set of proposals for regional development cooperation, for consideration of the Ministerial Conference.

27. ESCAP has initiated action to establish a forum of non-governmental organizations concerned with social development issues in the region to promote their active and constructive participation and ensure their effective coordination in the implementation of the Social Development Strategy. A regional symposium on the role of non-governmental organizations in implementation of the Social Development Strategy will be held at Bangkok in August 1994. It is envisaged that the recommendations emanating from that symposium will be transmitted to the member Governments at the Ministerial Conference to be held at Manila in October 1994.

28. The Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women and Development will be held at Jakarta from 7 to 14 June 1994. As a preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women, it will be devoted primarily to a review and appraisal of the regional implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the formulation of a regional plan of action to advance the status of women. That regional conference will also be linked with regional preparations for the World Summit for Social Development.

IV. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A. Social development in the Commission's overall work programme in the past few years

29. The concept of social development expressed in the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council (E/1993/77) is entirely consistent with the proposal of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for recovering economic growth in the region while simultaneously reaching higher levels of social equity.

30. This effort has crystallized in the proposal on "changing production patterns with social equity", which has been endorsed by the region's Governments and augmented in a number of subsequent documents. 1/ These documents postulate the mutually supportive interactions between growth and equity: social equity cannot be achieved in the absence of solid, sustained growth, but growth requires a reasonable degree of socio-political stability, which entails, in turn, the fulfilment of certain requirements in the area of equity.

31. A basic feature of the Commission's approach is that it moves away from the tendency to emphasize trade-offs between the objectives of growth and equity, opting instead to point out the areas in which they complement each other. 2/ Growth with equity can only be generated if the two objectives are targeted by both economic and social policy. This involves, on the one hand, adopting economic policies which promote social equity as well as growth and, on the other, taking into account the effects of social policy on production and efficiency as well as equity.

32. Environmentally sustainable growth with social equity in a democratic context is not only desirable but also achievable, although the means of pursuing it can vary significantly from one country to another depending on the magnitude, extent and characteristics of prevailing poverty. In general, the Commission's proposals revolve around three broad policy areas that further the goal of social equity: achieving increases in productive employment, investment in human capital and transfers.

33. This integrated approach to development has characterized the various activities carried out by ECLAC, often in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, including the Third Regional Conference on Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Santiago, 23-25 November 1992); the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on Population and Development (Mexico City, 29 April-4 May 1993) (see E/CONF.84/PC/17); and the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting Preparatory to the International Year of the Family (Cartagena, Colombia, 9-14 August 1993). ECLAC has also acted as focal point for the joint activities of various United Nations agencies in the region and the Latin American Economic System (SELA) in the area of social policies, and cooperates with the Organization of American States (OAS) in the Joint Programme on Social Policies for Latin America.

B. Activities undertaken in 1993

34. The Commission has supported the Government of Brazil in substantive preparations on the topic of social development for the Third Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held at Salvador da Bahía on 15 and 16 July (see A/48/291-S/26242); and assisted the Government of Chile in preparing a document on the World Summit for Social Development, to be presented at the Rio Group Presidential Summit on 15 and 16 October at Santiago. It will also present a document and participate in the Mexican Conference on Social Development and Poverty, to be held at Oaxaca from 8 to 11 November, and it took part in the forty-sixth annual conference of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat and the Executive Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations associated with that Department, on the theme "Social development: a new definition for security", held at New York from 8 to 10 September.

35. The Commission has prepared a note by the secretariat for presentation at its twenty-fifth session, to be held at Cartagena, Colombia, from 20 to 27 April 1994, which contains an analysis of the substantive aspects of the World Summit for Social Development from the Latin American and Caribbean perspective and a set of proposals related to international and regional cooperation on this subject.

36. This note, which closely follows the format of the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1993/77), first discusses the global and regional context surrounding the main problems related to social development, and then explains the integrated approach, which simultaneously addresses the complementary objectives of changing production patterns and enhancing social equity. Next, it specifically discusses the three core issues to be considered at the Summit - social integration, alleviation and reduction of poverty, and expansion of productive employment - and concludes with a chapter on proposals for international cooperation.

37. This last chapter emphasizes the need for the Summit to produce a shared awareness of the integrated approach to development that characterizes various aspects of international cooperation, including, inter alia, a platform of globally recognized minimum social conditions for laying more equitable foundations for trade and international competition, agreements regarding transboundary movements of workers and migrants, the exchange of experiences with public policies concerning the core issues of the Summit, and international monitoring of the objectives agreed upon.

C. Activities planned for 1994

38. The Commission has placed the topic of the preparation and convening of the Summit on the agenda of its twenty-fifth session, during which its member Governments will discuss the proposals contained in the aforementioned note.

39. Also in 1994, the Fourth Regional Conference on Poverty will be held in Mexico, and the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean will be held at Buenos Aires, Argentina, in September 1994. These conferences will naturally be linked to preparations for the Summit.

40. The Commission will carefully consider the decisions reached at the first session of the Preparatory Committee, for the Summit, to be held from 31 January to 11 February 1994, and will study the possibility of holding seminars more specifically focused on the topics of social integration and productive employment in the context of an integrated approach to development.

V. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

A. Social development in the Commission's overall work programme in the past few years

41. Over the years, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been giving high priority to social development issues and activities, with consistent emphasis on the need to deal with these issues and to formulate social development policies and strategies within the framework of an integrated approach to development as well as the need to place social and human development concerns at the core of the development process. This priority and emphasis have been reflected in the conceptual and analytical framework; policy recommendations; training activities; policy workshops, conferences and meetings; and advisory services of ECA.

42. While social and human development issues cut across the work of ECA, the following programmes and subprogrammes focus primarily on these areas: human resources development; social development; advancement of women; population; environment and development; agriculture and rural development; and social policies planning and research.

43. The human-centred approach of ECA to development has, in particular, found expression in major policy documents of the Commission such as the Lagos Plan of Action; the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (A/44/315, annex); the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development; the Khartoum Declaration: Towards a Human-focused Approach to Socio-economic Recovery and Development in Africa (A/43/430, annex I); Kilimanjaro Programme of Action for African Population and Self-Reliant Development (E/CONF.76/6, annex V); Arusha Forward-Looking Strategy for the Advancement of Women; Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development - the Role of Women in the 1990s; the African Charter for Social Action; Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa; etc.

44. Social and human development concerns are also discussed regularly not only at the meetings of the ECA Conference of Ministers but also at the specialized standing conferences such as the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization; the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs; the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten; and the African Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC).

45. At its last meeting, the Conference of Ministers decided to merge the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization and the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs into a new Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Development. This decision

should provide an opportunity for greater coherence in the decision-making, monitoring and evaluation processes as related to social and human development.

B. Activities undertaken in 1993

46. To galvanize support for the Summit among its member States and to ensure timely and coordinated preparations for the Summit, the secretariat included an item on the Summit in the agenda of the twenty-eighth session of the Commission/nineteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers and also prepared a note for the meeting entitled "Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development 1995".

47. The note apprised the ministerial meeting of General Assembly resolution 47/92, provided an analysis of the issues which the Summit should focus on from an African perspective, and made recommendations on how African countries should prepare for and participate in the Summit.

48. Guided by the proposals of this note, the Conference of Ministers transmitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1993 a text that the Council subsequently adopted as resolution 1993/64, entitled "Preparations for the World Summit for Social Development".

49. A number of conferences, workshops and meetings have been organized by ECA in 1993 in the field of social development. Many of them have dealt with the priority areas of the Summit, namely, poverty alleviation, generation of productive employment and social integration. These have included the Symposium "From Conflict to Concord: Regional Cooperation in the Horn of Africa" during 8 to 12 July 1993 (supported by the United States Institute of Peace); the Meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Development, Planning and Utilization (April 1993); and the inaugural meeting of the Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs (1-3 June 1993). A Regional Conference on Women, Peace and Development will be held at Kampala from 22 to 26 November 1993.

50. A number of regional strategies in the field of social development have been adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1993, including the Strategic Objectives for Africa's Socio-economic Development in the 1990s, "Human Development Agenda for Africa in the 1990s, and Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development (see E/CONF.84/PC/13, annex).

C. Planned activities for 1994

51. The major event in 1994 in relation to the Summit will be the organization of the first meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Development, which will serve as the African regional preparatory meeting for the Summit.

52. A number of other activities - conferences, workshops training programmes - will be organized and technical publications will be issued in 1994 in the field of social development, including the organization of the Fifth Regional

Conference on Women, in Preparation for the World Conference, which will be held at Dakar in November 1994.

VI. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

A. Social development in the Commission's overall work programme in the past few years

53. Paragraph 1 of the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1993/77) describes the world in transition in general, but the same words can best describe the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) where there is "a sense of great opportunity and hope that a new world can be built - a world of peace and stability, where the goal of social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom can be realized through genuine international cooperation" (E/1993/77, para. 1). The ESCWA proposal for the Agenda for Development stressed the importance of stability and peace in the region whose human and material resources would then be freed to achieve economic growth accompanied by social equity.

54. The ESCWA region is in a state of rapid political, economical and social transition, in which its people are striving to assert their identity, to rebuild their internal structures and to redefine their external relations so as to safeguard the region from internal instability and external threats. Internally, the region is experiencing a process of democratization which allowed the emergence of different expressions of extremism, as the social and political responses to the rapid socio-cultural changes and the deteriorating economic conditions. Externally, the region is striving to meet the challenge of ending the 50-year old Arab-Israeli conflict, establishing regional peace and realizing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It is a region still holding its breath with pending hope for the future generations to live in peace and prosperity.

55. The region has been for decades the stage for many wars and armed conflicts, internal and external. Besides the four Arab-Israeli wars, the region is presently confronted by the result of the Iraq-Iran War, the Gulf Crisis and War and internal strife in some countries of the region, such as the conflict in Lebanon. The people of the region live in a continuous state of crises, which is aggravated by structural imbalances, including income disparities between countries, between urban and rural areas, and among the people, unequitable distribution of energy resources at the regional level, inadequate energy supply, water shortages, desertification and lack of food security, and external indebtedness in some countries of the region. In the social area, the people have been suffering from inequitable distribution of benefits and services, illiteracy, unemployment, and increasing poverty.

56. During the past few years, ESCWA, through its Social Development Division, has focused on the concerns of the marginalized groups in the society, mainly women and youth, who are most affected by the transitional period through which the region is moving. Attention has also been given to the issue of disability, which has become an important concern in the region as a result of wars and armed conflicts. Owing to the differences among countries of the region in terms of human and material resources, issues of population movement, especially

migration in the region, were also of prime concern. Policy statements were adopted by ESCWA member countries to meet the urgent needs of these targeted groups of the population.

57. In formulating the programme of work for the biennium 1994-1995, the four subprogrammes comprising the Social Development Division (Human settlements, Population, Social development and welfare and Women and development) adopted the themes of eradication of poverty, expansion of productive employment and realization of social integration as the focal issues for an inter-disciplinary approach. The significance of this approach lies in the recognition that to achieve stability and prosperity for all in the region, development must address people as actors and beneficiaries. It thus requires the marriage between economic growth and social equity within an integrated socio-economic framework for policies and programmes that meet the needs of the present generation and safeguard the rights to resources of the future generations. It also takes into consideration the importance of building on work already undertaken and learning from its findings and conclusions to enhance the futuristic perspective on social development. Furthermore, it is to be noted that within the context of the recent development in the peace settlements in the region, the programme of work of ESCWA in general, and social development in particular, will give increasing attention to the needs for social development of the Palestinian people.

B. Activities undertaken in 1993

58. In response to the recent events in the region, studies were undertaken to identify the impact of the crisis on the social situation of the region, assess population movements associated with the Gulf Crisis, especially the impact of the war on return migration, and investigate the reintegration of women returnees and their families in the societies of origin. Studies were also undertaken to review national policies and programmes for drug abuse, to assess the situation of marginalized youth and to identify the extent of drug abuse by youth. The assessment of the housing situation was also directly linked to population movements for economic reasons and as a result of crisis. In addition, the Proceedings of the Symposium on Low-cost Housing in the Arab Region, held in Sana'a, Yemen, from 24 to 28 October 1992, were published. A study on neighbourhood and community cohesiveness in urban life assesses the relationship between the physical setting and the degree of community awareness and integration of low-income groups of the population in sites and services projects. Under the Development planning subprogramme, the conceptual framework for the measurement of poverty from an economic perspective complements the study on the social situation in the region, which specifically emphasizes the conceptual definition of poverty from a social development perspective.

59. The Arab Population Conference, organized by UNFPA, the League of Arab States and ESCWA, and held at Amman, Jordan, from 4 to 8 April 1993, adopted the Second Amman Declaration on Population and Development (E/CONF.84/PC/16, annex), which took into consideration the demographic and social challenges that meet the region. An Expert Group Meeting on Unemployment, held at Amman from 26 to 29 July 1993, examined this constraint that has serious social implications. An Expert Group Meeting on Human Development, to be convened in cooperation with the League of Arab States and UNDP, will be held at Cairo from 6 to

9 December 1993 and will launch a concerted effort in this area. An Expert Group Meeting on the Cultural Context of the Arab City was held at Amman from 6 to 9 June 1993 to study the impact of the transitional phase on the Arab city.

C. Activities planned for 1994

60. In formulating its work programme and implementing the interdisciplinary approach, ESCWA focused on the preparation for the World Summit on Social Development. The regional social development agenda, which will be formulated in 1995, will be based on the cumulative findings of the studies undertaken during the biennia 1992-1993 and 1994-1995 and the recommendations of the ESCWA member countries. The data for these studies will be derived from the database on social statistics prepared by the Statistics Division, which works closely with the Social Development Division. A unified study on the social aspects of poverty will consist of chapters examining the issue of poverty intersectorally, namely, the demographic and socio-economic responses to poverty; emergencies, crises and poverty: extent and measures for poverty alleviation; impact of emergency situations and crises in the region on Arab women: the feminization of poverty; unemployment and poverty; and underemployment in the public sector. These publications, in addition to the documents prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on the Arab Family (February 1994), will complement the study produced by the Division for Sustainable Economic Development on policies and measures to reduce income disparities and alleviate poverty in selected ESCWA countries. The assessment of the situation of women between 1985-1994, within the framework of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and the impact of emergency situations and crises on youth will provide an additional input into the preparations for the World Summit for Social Development. Assessment of experiences and prospects of community development in the ESCWA region will provide regional perspective on the responses of ESCWA member countries to the issue of rural poverty and internal migration. Studies on the technological and social aspects of upgrading and revitalizing settlements, the housing crisis in the ESCWA region and the development of indigenous capabilities for construction will provide the human settlements perspective on poverty. In addition, the textual database on policies and programmes in the area of population, social development and women, supported by the database on social statistics, will be established to provide a basis for the assessment of the Governments' responses to the eradication of poverty, productive employment and social integration. A technical cooperation project on community development in selected ESCWA countries will provide the rural perspective on issues of poverty and unemployment.

61. The findings and conclusions of all these intersectoral studies will be augmented by dialogue with ESCWA member countries individually through ESCWA technical assistance support to member countries in the preparation of their national papers and national platforms within the context of the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development or collectively through the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women (November 1994) and the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit for Social Development (December 1994). The cumulative result of these research and technical assistance efforts will form the basis for the formulation of the regional social development agenda.

Notes

1/ See ECLAC, Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity: The Prime Task of Latin American and Caribbean Development in the 1990s (LC/G.1601-P), Santiago, Chile, March 1990, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.II.G.6; Sustainable Development: Changing Production Patterns, Social Equity and the Environment (LC/G.1648/Rev.2-P), Santiago, Chile, May 1991, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.II.G.5; Social Equity and Changing Production Patterns: An Integrated Approach (LC/G.1701/Rev.1-P), Santiago, Chile, 1992, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.92.II.G.5; ECLAC/UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Education and Knowledge: Basic Pillars of Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity (LC/G.1702/Rev.1-P), Santiago, Chile, 1992, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.92.II.G.6; and ECLAC/CELADE, Population, Social Equity and Changing Production Patterns (LC/G.1758/Rev.1-P); LC/DEM/G.131/Rev.1-Series E, No. 37), Santiago, Chile, 1993, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.II.G.8.

2/ See especially ECLAC, Social Equity and ..., op. cit., pp. 15-44.